



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1758 | FAX (517) 373.0938

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Contact: Kerry Krone  
517-373-1758

## Senate passes Cassis' 'Good Builder' bills

### *Bipartisan package helps ensure building code compliance*

LANSING—The Senate today passed a bipartisan package of bills led by Sen. Nancy Cassis that will protect and advance the professionalism, ethics and integrity of the residential building industry while giving consumers greater confidence and security in those they hire.

The package, known as the “Good Builder” bills, consists of Senate Bills 631, 632, 826 and 827. The first two bills, SBs 631 and 632, were sponsored by Sen. Cassis. SBs 826 and 827 were sponsored by Sens. Ray Basham and Burton Leland, respectively.

“With these measures, Michigan becomes a leader in protecting consumers from substandard building practices while encouraging licensed builders and contractors,” said Cassis, R-Nov. “This legislation will strongly deter those who refuse to obtain licenses by way of fines, penalties and even jail time for substandard scamming of the public.”

The bills give the state the authority to go after unlicensed builders. The legislation also creates the Builder Enforcement Fund in the Michigan Department of Treasury. Each licensee will pay a \$30 one-time fee to this fund for the purpose of prosecuting unlicensed builder activity. After startup of the fund, civil fines collected from prosecuting unlicensed builders will continue to fund this program.

The legislation:

- Requires that all licensees have continuing education for the first six years after initial licensure. Should a violation occur the department could require up to 18 hours of continuing education from the builder;
- Creates a residential builders' and maintenance and alteration contractors' board; and
- Requires the Department of Treasury to post on its website any complaints against licensees within 30 days after the determination by the board.

Builders convicted of a misdemeanor enacted by the legislation could face up to a year in jail, and second offenses are punishable by up to two years in jail. A third offense is a felony, with a penalty of up to four years in jail. The bills also provide for civil fines up to \$25,000.

“When a consumer hires a builder or contractor to build or remodel the largest investment they will probably ever make in their lives—their homes—they need to be confident that the product will live up to the standards of contract integrity and first-rate workmanship,” said Cassis.

Lee Schwartz, Michigan Association of Home Builders executive vice president for government relations, endorsed the legislation.

“These are important bills, and we were pleased to work with Senator Cassis on them,” said Schwartz. “They will help protect consumers against unscrupulous builders, while rewarding and strengthening the professionalism of the honest, good builders and remodelers in the industry.”

The measures also contain a provision for builders to place their licenses on inactive status, allowing the licensee to keep his or her license with no continuing education requirement. Before the builder may use the license again, the continuing education requirement must be met.

The legislation now goes to the governor for a signature.

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